



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: MFWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, May 17 - 23, 2008

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

At the end of 2007, the Montana wolf population was estimated at a minimum of 422 wolves, 73 packs and 39 Breeding Pairs according the federal recovery criteria. The 2008 Montana Wolf Program Annual Report along with other monitoring information can be found on the FWP wolf page.

Seasonal workers Kris Boyd and Alan Whitehead started this week in northwest Montana. With Laudon, they successfully captured and deployed 1 GPS collar each in the Kintla and Whitefish packs on the west side of Glacier National Park in the North Fork of the Flathead River. The GPS collars are part of a wolf-elk PhD research project (see Research section below).

A radio collar was retrieved by a citizen while horseback riding in the Danaher Valley (south end of the Bob Marshall wilderness) and returned to Seely Lake area biologist Jay Kolbe this week. No carcass was found after searching the area. The collar appeared to have been on the ground for a while and had extensive chewing damage to the collar and environmental damage to the transmitter box itself. Wolves can and do chew their collars off. FWP is not sure which wolf wore the collar but is working on finding out. In the last 2 years, FWP received periodic reports of collared animals in the wilderness area and has flown extensively for missing collars. It is likely an old collar with a failed battery.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

Back on the 15th, FWP wardens investigated a report of a wolf attack on a domestic dog (lab) in the Horse Butte area near West Yellowstone. The dog is OK. Bison are calving in the area and that may be attracting the apparently lone wolf. It has been seen close to houses and FWP -Ross and others- are closely monitoring the situation and will remove the wolf.

On the 18th, FWP met with area landowners near Hall about the Willow Creek Pack and concerns about their livestock. This meeting was a follow up to an earlier meeting. A range rider project is now underway through an agreement of a group of producers and FWP. The producers themselves will increase their efforts from now through mid summer. FWP will make extra efforts to increase monitoring efforts in mid-summer as ranch work shifts to haying etc.

Outreach and Education Activities

Back on May 5th, FWP Regional Information and Education Program Manager Dwayne Andrews (Miles City) had 127 local 2nd graders visit the Headquarters office. He did a program with the fur trunk, talked about Montana ecosystems, including wolf ecology using the wolf hide.

Research Activities

The Kintla and Whitefish packs on the west side of Glacier National Park each contain 1 store-on-board GPS radio collar. These packs are part of an Oregon State University PhD research project looking at wolf effects on aspen communities through influence on abundance and behavior of elk (the concept of trophic cascades). It is also part of the *Southern Alberta Montane Elk Study*, an interagency, transboundary collaboration in which we are working with 98 elk fitted with GPS collars, and 7 radio-collared wolf packs. Project partners include Shell Canada, Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Waterton Lakes National Park, Glacier National Park, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and Oregon State University.

Law Enforcement Activities

On the 19th, the carcass of a female wolf from the 8-Mile pack was retrieved from the field. It was taken to the Lab in Bozeman to determine cause of death. The animal had a “rope” tail, a common signal for the presence of mange which is an external parasite.

Other

Wolf Litigation: On May 8th Judge Malloy granted intervenor status to the State of Montana / Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. MT / FWP opposed the request for a preliminary injunction

and submitted documents to the court on May 16th. FWP presented information suggesting that an injunction in Montana was not necessary. FWP also suggested that the Court could craft a solution specific to this case at the injunction stage by separating Montana from the other states, which would allow Montana to move forward under the Court's oversight and supervision while the main litigation moves forward. The oral arguments about the request for a preliminary injunction will be heard May 29th.

=====

To learn more about Montana's recovered wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana / Columbus area at: 322-4303. Or call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

2008-05-23 Montana Wolf Weekly.pdf